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AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/11
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [XL](#) [CH](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: Pol/Econ Round-up December 25- January 11

CLASSIFIED BY: Carol Horning, Charge d'affaires, USAID, USAID;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (U) This "round-up" reporting cable covers the period from December 25, 2009 to January 11, 2010.

Search for next PPP Presidential Candidate Begins

¶2. (C) The People's Progressive Party (PPP) General Secretary Donald Ramotar publicly stated on December 30 that the PPP has started the process to identify a presidential candidate for the 2011 national elections. While discussions are "very preliminary", individuals identified as potential candidates include Ramotar, Speaker of the National Assembly Ralph Ramkarran, Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud, and Member of Parliament Moses Nagamooto. Ramotar publicly stated on December 30 that he would feel "honored" to receive the party nomination and that he would accept. Moses Nagamooto told PolChief on December 31 that Ramotar announced this publicly without the "blessing" of the Executive Committee. Political and business elites have told PolChief that while Ramotar is the front runner, much depends upon power struggles within the Party and Jagdeo's post-2011 plans.

China and Guyana Sign USD5.9 Million Cooperation Agreement

¶3. (C) On December 23, Finance Minister Ashni Singh and Chinese Ambassador to Guyana Zhang Jungao signed an economic and technical cooperation agreement worth USD5.9 million. Singh told PolChief on January 8 that likely sectors of cooperation include agriculture and the health sector. He said that the Chinese government has provided funding for the GoG in excess of USD32 million over the past five years. The Chinese have invested in several projects in Guyana including transportation infrastructure, mushroom cultivation, construction of a co-generation plant at Berbice to enhance sugar production, loans to finance the development of the power sector, and providing medical equipment and training for doctors, Singh said.

Broadcast and FOI legislation Still Not Passed

¶4. (SBU) In August, 2009, President Bharrat Jagdeo publicly promised that by 2010, the Broadcast Bill and Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill would be passed, breaking the government's monopoly on radio and providing the public access to information. Proponents of both bills have argued that the bills are essential for allowing private individuals access to radio licenses, and

improving transparency and government accountability. Despite a 2008 Guyana Court of Appeal decision stating the government monopoly on radio was illegal, as well as repeated calls by opposition party members for public access to information, movement to pass both pieces of legislation remains slow. Skepticism remains over the Jagdeo Administration's commitment to pass legislation as dates for approval continue to be pushed back indefinitely.

300,000 ounces of Gold Declared - Record Breaking Figure

15. (SBU) The Guyana Gold Board (GGB) saw a record-breaking declaration of over 305,000 troy ounces declared in 2009 by small and medium scale miners, representing a 17.2 percent increase over 2008 figures. The GGB reported that while the performance of gold has been improving in recent years, a parallel market is distorting the true production and declaration figures for gold in Guyana. The sudden media and public relations campaign announcing "record" numbers by the GGB is politically based, according to industry analysts. Gold miners are concerned that President Jagdeo's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and accompanying regulations will hurt the mining industry. In particular, recent government proposals mandating miners to provide six months notice prior to commencing mining operations and giving the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) veto power over mining activities, is a cause for concern, GGB members said. Launching media campaigns is one way the Board puts pressure on the Jagdeo Administration to scrap regulations perceived to negatively impact the mining industry.

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